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To obtain information about student constructivists (students whose social concern is expressed through involvement in restitutive work), this study investigated the extent of college student involvement in constructive social activities, and compared the characteristics of these students with a random sample of undergraduates at the University of Minnesota. Results indicated that while college students appear to be interested in constructive social action, most feel too pressed by other obligations to participate. It is theorized that the small minority who participate do so because family and friends place a high value upon social action, or because of that action's relevance to their major field or vocational choice. Colleges should, perhaps, find means to encourage constructive outlets for social concern. Findings also indicate that constructivists, as distinct from activists, do not appear markedly different from other college students. Volunteers tend to live near campus in residences other than their family home. This appears to indicate that students involved in social action activities have achieved a higher degree of social maturity and have found an independent way to extend family values. (KP)

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COLLEGE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

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College students today are presumed to have a high interest in social issues and to participate extensively in activities aimed at the solution of social problems. Considerable attention has been given to the student "activist," whose social concern is expressed in demonstrations and protests against existing social institutions (Flacks, 1967; Heist, 1965; Katz, 1967; Lipset & Wolin, 1965; Westby & Braungart, 1966). However, less is known about what has been termed the student "constructivist" (Block, Haan & Smith, 1967), whose social concern is more often expressed by restitutive work with the sick or the disadvantaged.

In the first place, little is known about how pervasive such constructive social action activities are among college students. If what is known about activists holds for constructivists, they are a small minority of college students. Peterson (1966), for example, found that only 9 per cent of a college student body could be classified as involved in protest movements and that such movements were concentrated mainly in a few select colleges. Trent and Craise (1967), on the basis of data from an extensive survey of college students, concluded that the average college student in 1963 was quite unlike those in activist groups. They found that the great majority of college students, particularly those in applied fields such as education and engineering, were either apathetic on social issues or very practically oriented. Of course, these data bear only upon activities such as political activism and dissent rather than upon constructivist activities.

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Some indication of how extensively college students are involved in constructivist activities comes from a survey made by the National Student Association of tutorial projects in which students were involved in helping culturally disadvantaged children (Senterfelt, 1966). Well over 600 such projects were located, and in the 322 projects from which questionnaire responses were obtained, over 40,000 tutors were found to be working with a total of 75,000 tutees of elementary or high school age. This survey suggests the possibility that constructivism may be more widespread among college students than is activism. One purpose of the present study was to obtain a more careful estimate of how extensively college students are involved in constructivist activities.

Secondly, characteristics of constructivist college students are not well known. Again, substantial information exists only about the characteristics of activists. According to Katz (1967), activists, compared to non-activists, tend to have parents higher in income, occupational level and education. Activists tend to have higher verbal aptitude, to have more intellectual interests, to get higher grades and to be more flexible, tolerant, realistic and independent. Whether these same differences are true of constructivists has not been fully explored. The possibility that constructivists might be a less distinctive group has been suggested by Gelineau and Kantor (1964), who studied Harvard and Radcliffe students who had volunteered to work in mental hospitals with disturbed patients. They found such volunteers not at all unlike a comparison group, composed of non volunteers. No marked differences

were observed in economic or social background nor in academic accomplishment. Only in terms of career direction (volunteers tended to be interested in "helping" professions) and values (volunteers had high service and low economic value patterns) did they differ very markedly from their counterparts.

A third question about which little is known concerns the motivations of students who engage in constructivist activities, including the extent to which such activities represent a rejection of existing society or a general rise in social responsibility among young people. The "drop-out" and "love-in" philosophy of the hippy movement has sometimes been interpreted as an extreme example of feelings shared by college students generally.

The present study, which sought to obtain information about student constructivists, had two major purposes. First, it was designed to investigate the extent of college student involvement in constructive social action activities. A random sample of college students at a large midwestern university was questioned about the amount of such participation.

Since a difficulty exists in knowing the accuracy with which college students report such matters, responses of sample members were compared with those of students who were known to be participating in a tutorial project. The responses of the students in the tutorial project could then serve as a baseline against which to estimate the proportion of college students generally who are as much involved. On the basis of

the survey of Senterfelt (1967) it was hypothesized that such involvement would prove to be more extensive than has been shown for student activists.

The second purpose was to compare the characteristics of participants in a constructive social action project and a random sample of their contemporaries. On the basis of the study by Gelineau and Kantor (1967) it was hypothesized that constructivists would resemble their contemporaries more than has been found to be the case with activists. In this phase of the study emphasis was given not only to demographic characteristics but also to other factors that might reveal something of the motivations of college students participating in constructivist activities, including the level of general pro-social motivation, the extent of awareness of and participation in campus affairs, the perceived value of such participation and the competing pressures of study, work and family obligations.

Method

The study was conducted by means of a questionnaire administered to volunteers in a tutorial program and to a random sample of undergraduates at the University of Minnesota.

The volunteers were participants in Project Motivation, in which college students worked on a one-to-one basis with culturally disadvantaged elementary school children. During 1967, when this study was conducted, 100 college students were participating in the project. Volunteers received questionnaires in the mail, and follow-up was undertaken by telephone. Eighty-four volunteers (84%) returned completed questionnaires.

In the questionnaire Ss were first given the following definition:

BY 'SOCIAL ACTION ACTIVITY' WE MEAN ANY ACTIVITY WHICH HAS AS ITS MAIN FUNCTION WORKING ON A SOCIETAL PROBLEM IN A WAY WHICH DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTES TO ITS SOLUTION.

For example, for the purposes of this questionnaire we would consider the following groups as social action groups: group work in a settlement house, volunteer work in a hospital, tutoring a disadvantaged child, the Peace Corps, VISTA, voter registration in disadvantaged areas, etc.

We would NOT consider the following to be social action groups: sorority, fraternity, Young Democrats or Republicans, Student Government, church membership, or other activities primarily of a social or educational nature.

Then Ss were asked a series of questions about the extent of their interest and participation in such activities, the interest and participation of family and friends, and the reasons why the average college student does or does not participate.

Another section of the questionnaire contained a number of questions that tested specific knowledge about campus affairs. It w intended as a test of the hypothesis that volunteers were generally more active and better informed about campus affairs. Also included in the questionnaire was a social responsibility scale developed by Berkowitz and Daniels (1964). It provided a measure of students' general pro-social motivation. Also, a number of items were included to secure demographic data. In-

cluded were questions about age, sex, marital status, college, class, grade point average, major area of study, size of community at high school graduation, student's present residence, major source of income and occupation of parent. Finally Ss were asked to estimate the amount of time per week that they spent in a variety of activities, including class, study, work, family obligations, sports, social action, other organizations, recreation, and commuting.

Responses to the questionnaire were tabulated and, utilizing appropriate statistical tests, responses of volunteers were compared with those of the random sample.

Results

In a preliminary analysis questionnaire responses of volunteers and non-volunteers were compared separately by sex. Since in no case were results of comparisons different as a function of sex, data for males and females were combined.

Responses to the questionnaire indicated that college students at Minnesota had favorable opinions of social action activities but were only moderately interested in them, expressed opinions about them with only moderate frequency, and participated in them infrequently. Volunteers, by comparison reported significantly more favorable opinions of social action activities ($t = 5.45$, $P < .001$), were significantly more interested in such activities ($t = 13.75$, $P < .001$), expressed their opinions with significantly more frequency ($t = 8.04$, $P < .001$), and reported significantly more participation ($t = 7.74$, $P < .001$). The

results of these comparisons substantiated the premise of the study that Project Motivation volunteers were different from the average college student in reported interest and participation in social action activities.

The same fact is reflected in the time commitments reported by respondents. In the random sample the median respondent reported spending only 2.8 hours per week on the average in social action activities. The median volunteer, on the other hand, reported an average of 9.7 hours per week in such activities. A median test revealed that the difference was significant ($X^2 = 84.03$, $p < .001$). Less than 3% of the random sample reported as much participation in social action as the average volunteer. Seventy percent of the sample reported fewer than four hours per week.

Surprisingly, very few differences were found in other time commitments reported by the volunteers and members of the sample. Volunteers, as compared to members of the sample, reported significantly more time spent in social activities ($X^2 = 4.13$, $p < .05$). The only category where members of the sample reported significantly more time spent than volunteers was in commuting ($X^2 = 15.57$, $p < .001$). The University of Minnesota is perhaps unique in the extent to which it serves a commuting student body. Evidently, being a commuter works against participation in college-based activities such as Project Motivation. Or, perhaps, characteristics associated with being a commuter are related to other factors that determine the extent of participation in social action.

One explanation often given for student social action is a heightened

sense of social responsibility. It was hypothesized in the present study that participants in Project Motivation would have high levels of social responsibility as compared with the average college student. Surprisingly, responses to the Berkowitz and Daniels Social Responsibility Scale were not significantly different for volunteers and the sample. Perhaps, on the basis of these results, the validity of this scale should be questioned. Alternatively, what may be the case is that the primary motives for such participation are not those of general social service.

Responses of volunteers to the 12-item campus affairs test included in the questionnairewere likewise not significantly different from those of the sample. Combined with the information about student time commitments, this result fails to support the view that those who participate in pro-social action projects are those who are more generally informed about and involved in a variety of campus activities.

A number of questionnaire items were devoted to demographic characteristics of respondents. Frequency distributions were obtained for each item, and X^2 statistics were computed for each variable to test the hypothesis that distributions for volunteers and for the larger sample might have some from the same population.

Distributions on sex proved to be significantly different ($X^2 = 21.62$, $p < .001$). Over 75% of volunteers were females, while in the sample males and females were evenly divided. Age distributions ($X^2 = 18.09$, $p < .01$) and distributions by college class ($X^2 = 12.96$, $p < .02$) were likewise significantly different. Volunteers, compared with the sample, tended to be older and more likely to have advanced standing.

Enrollment in the several colleges of the University was another differentiating characteristic. Ninety per cent of volunteers were from the College of Liberal Arts compared to 75% of the total sample. Only 6% of volunteers were enrolled in either the Institute of Technology (science and engineering majors) or the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics. The comparable figure for the sample was 21%. Distributions according to the college in which students were enrolled were significantly different ($X^2 = 10.59$, $p < .01$). The same information was reflected in the fields of major study of volunteers compared to those of the sample. Almost 60% of volunteers were majoring in the social sciences or psychology; for the sample only 28% were in the same fields. Volunteers were markedly under-represented in such fields as engineering, science, mathematics, agriculture and business. No appreciable differences were apparent in such fields as education, medicine or dentistry. Distributions by reported grade-point average were also different ($X^2 = 20.66$, $p < .001$). Volunteers tended to have higher averages than the sample members.

In an effort to determine the type of community from which respondents had come, one item asked about the community in which respondents had lived at the time of high school graduation. Responses of volunteers were significantly different from those of the random sample ($X^2 = 13.97$, $p < .02$). Volunteers were less likely than sample members to have lived in a large metropolitan area.

Another marked difference between volunteers and the random sample

was observed in responses to an item about present resident ($X^2 = 34.73$, $p < .001$). Volunteers were more likely than sample members to live outside their parents' home and within walking distance of the campus. This finding is consistent with the difference, reported above, in the amount of time spent commuting. Sixty-four percent of the sample reported their residence to be beyond walking distance; the comparable figure for volunteers was 37%.

Responses on other demographic items were not significantly different. No difference was observed in marital status, number of children, source of present income or in occupational status of head of parents' household.

Next, respondents were asked to rate the importance to the average college student of several reasons for and against participation in social action activities, as they were defined in the study. On the basis of mean ratings, both volunteers and members of the sample agreed on the relative importance of reasons. Most important reasons for participation were the desire for personal experience and a fulfillment of moral conviction. Less weight was given to the chance to meet new friends, the fulfillment of political convictions and rebellion against society, in that order.

In two cases the mean ratings of volunteers and sample members differed significantly. Volunteers placed significantly more weight on unselfish reasons than did the sample. Also they gave less weight than did sample members to rebellion as a motivation for participation. However, neither of these differences changed the relative ranking compared

with the other five reasons. Thus, college students are in good agreement that the motivations for participation are constructive and related to the participant's desire for learning experiences, and there is little difference in the perceived values of participation between the volunteers and the sample.

The same agreement also holds for the ratings of reasons for non-participation. On the basis of mean ratings, both volunteers and sample members agreed that the main reason for non-participation is the lack of time. In descending order of importance they placed lack of knowledge of how to join, unfavorable attitudes toward people in social activities, lack of required skills and lack of personal rewards of participation. In only one case was there a significant difference between the mean ratings of any reason. Members of the sample placed less emphasis than did the volunteers on the lack of required skills as a reason for non-participation.

A number of questionnaire items were designed to probe the influence of family and friends on participation in pro-social action activities. These data, which are explored in detail in a related report (Johnson & Neale, 1968), yielded evidence about the extent to which selected individuals and reference groups had influenced respondents' opinions of such activities. Utilizing a seven-point scale from 1 (much influence) to 7 (little influence), mean ratings of volunteers and the random sample gave identical relative rankings to the various sources of influence. Most influential were "individuals outside the family who have had a

significant influence on your opinions and values toward social action." Next in order were friends, mother, father, sister(s) and brother(s).

Respondents were also asked to rate the same individuals and groups on their opinions of and participation in social action activities. Comparisons of the ratings of volunteers and members of the random sample on a t-test revealed a number of significant differences between the groups. Volunteers rated the opinions of their mothers, sisters, friends, and "an individual outside the family" significantly more favorably than did the sample members. No significant differences were observed in the case of father or brothers.

Volunteers rated their fathers, mothers, friends and "an individual outside the family" as having significantly more involvement than did sample members. No significant differences were observed in ratings for brothers or sisters. These results support the view that those who volunteer for constructivist activities are those from social contexts where high value is placed upon such activities. Certainly no indication was obtained that volunteers were in any way rebelling against family values.

Discussion

The implications of these findings for colleges and universities rest mainly in the perspective such findings give to recent evidences of student social concern. First, the pervasiveness of such activity appears to be extremely limited, perhaps too limited. Although college students appear to be interested in constructive social action, they feel too pressed by

other obligations to participate. Only a small minority overcome this pressure, perhaps because their family and friends place high value upon social action or because of its relevance to their field of major study or vocational choice. It may be that colleges and universities should find additional ways to encourage such constructive outlets for social concern in college students. Certainly, as reflected in student perceptions of the value of such participation, social action activities provide good opportunities for personal learning and growth. In the light of student criticisms about the personal relevance of much of their college experience, such activities should perhaps become a more significant element in a college education.

As pointed out by the Committee on the Student in Higher Education (1968), the "volunteer era" might end in disillusionment unless such activities are in some way integrated into the total educational experience of college students. The Committee recommended that colleges and universities go beyond a mere tolerance of volunteer service to ensure that it become a normal, rather than exceptional or unusual, college experience.

A second implication of these findings is that students with high social concerns should not be too readily viewed as a single group. The present study lends support instead to a distinction between student activists and student constructivists. Unlike what has been discovered about activists, constructivist students do not appear to be markedly different from other college students.

Of course, the present study did not actually compare activists with constructivists, and the matter deserves further study. Such study should involve the gathering of comparable data on the family background, present circumstances, personality characteristics, abilities and educational attainments of both activists, constructivists and possibly other groups.

One difference found between constructivists and college students generally deserves special comment. It is the tendency among the volunteers in this study to live close to the campus in a residence other than the family home. Although this may reflect the fact that commuting produces logistical problems and takes time that otherwise might be spent in social action activities, it may also reflect a heightened level of social maturity in students who participate. Perhaps the student who is involved in social action is one who has gained a certain independence from his family. Not that his values differ fundamentally from those of his parents; the data in this study do not suggest that his participation is out of line with family values. Rather, what is suggested is that study students have found a personal way to extend family values in an independent fashion. A similar hypothesis has been proposed for student activists (Katz, 1967).

If these speculations are correct, both student activists and constructivists should be viewed not as rebellious or immature, but as concerned individuals taking mature steps to translate values learned into actions relevant to today's problems as they see them.

This view is consistent with the opinions expressed by the college students in the present study about the reasons for participation in social action activities. Students believe a sincere desire to help others is a strong motivation for participation.

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